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15 March 1966

OCI No. 1159/66

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNIST DEVELOPMENTS

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
15 March 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Latin American Communist Developments

1. A number of Latin American Communist parties and allied leftist-extremist groups are entering a period of ideological ferment and change. The search is on for new answers to the perennial question of the means to power. The debate is uneven and far from ended. However, developments to date appear to portend additional problems for US national security interests in the hemisphere.

2. Various factors have contributed to disorganize several key Latin American parties and groups. The endemic problem of "personalismo"--squabbles based on personal rivalries--has been joined by deepening ideological and tactical dispute over the best way of promoting revolution. The Russians have tried to strengthen Moscow's influence within the far left and effect a "unified" position among the Communist parties. Finally, the Cubans have proved more choosy in assisting Latin American revolutionary groups, generally aiding only those few endorsed by the pro-Moscow Communist parties.

3. Several key Communist parties and groups are facing divisions along pro-Moscow and pro-Peking lines. The pro-Peking splinter groups are still numerically small in most countries, but there is growing dissatisfaction among younger party elements with the tactics of the old-guard party leadership. The leaders of the orthodox parties generally are old-line labor types, 55 to 65 years of age, and strongly opposed to armed struggle methods. They believe--with justification--that sporadic terrorism will only lead to government

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reprisals against the party, regardless of whether its members are involved. These leaders, with Soviet approval, have long advocated political action tactics through the labor unions and the multiparty "front." The young "firebrands," on the other hand, are eager for revolutionary action.

4. In the early 1960s, Castro's revolution and the contagion of the "Cuban example" seriously challenged the old-guard Communists' tactics and inspired young militants throughout the hemisphere. Moreover, the Cubans frequently sidestepped the local parties to establish and fund local groups more willing to follow along their path. This effort reached a peak in 1963.

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7. The Cubans, moreover, by comparison with 1961-1963, have considerably narrowed the scope of their subversive activities. Their total effort in this regard has lessened, presumably as a result of Castro's own awareness that "new Cubas" are not imminent, and his realization that solving Cuba's internal economic and political problems must be the regime's first order of business. In addition, Moscow has apparently urged the Cubans to be more cautious and to cooperate more fully with the local Communist parties.

8. At present, many Communist parties and allied groups are searching for programs which would serve to heal schisms, restore an element of revolutionary fervor, and improve their chances for political power without undue risk. For the short run, this quest will cause increased strains in certain countries. Significant pro-Peking party factions already have emerged in Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, and Argentina. The failure of the other parties to take to the streets may well cause similar divisions elsewhere.

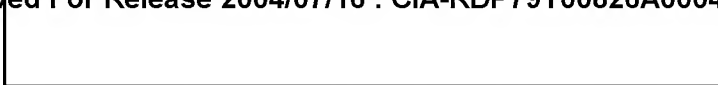
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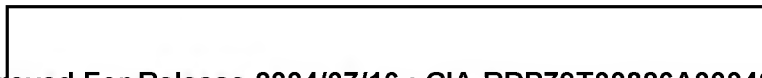
11. A series of articles which appeared in Soviet publications in 1965 probably were designed to give ideological guidance to the Communist parties in Latin America. The 17 May Soviet weekly, New Times, for example, advocated the establishment of broader united fronts, including the "liberal bourgeoisie," in Latin America. Writing with the events of the Dominican Republic in mind, the author stated: "If the Cuban revolution ushered in an age of peoples' democratic, socialist revolutions in the Western Hemisphere, the present developments in Dominica are the beginning of a new period, in which the conditions are being created for broad national anti-imperialist fronts to resist North American imperialism and protect the sovereignty of nations and their right to follow their own chosen paths." Clearly he was advising the Latin American Communists to exploit the rising anti-US nationalism prevailing in many of the parties of the non-Communist left.

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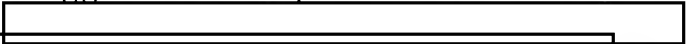
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13. A series of articles by Latin American Communist spokesmen in the August issue of Problems of Peace and Socialism reiterated the same theme. The common denominator of these articles was that a "broad united opposition front," including possibly members of the oligarchy but aimed at incorporating as much of the population as possible, was needed for either a peaceful or nonpeaceful struggle. A Costa Rican Communist leader, Eduardo Mora Valverde, wrote that full-scale Communist revolutions were not the immediate task in Latin America. Rather, the area's Communists were advised to pin their hopes on the "anti-imperialist and democratic revolution," a coalition of all political groups seeking revolutionary change. A Brazilian Communist, Pedro Motta Lima, wrote that the Latin American Communists must be capable of "uniting and mobilizing a broad front of social and political forces." Other authors argued in a similar vein.

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14. All this does not mean Havana and Moscow are consigning armed struggle to the proverbial "trash heap of history." 

 It does indicate, however, that the Communists have recognized the potential of "new Dominican Republics." Sharp, spontaneous non-Communist revolts against the old order which could provoke a sudden collapse of the traditional societal and governmental bulwarks are a very distinct possibility in a number of countries. Haiti, Guatemala, and Colombia are but three examples of countries with exceedingly shaky political structures. Should revolt come, the Communists presumably would repeat the strategy they followed in the Dominican Republic, i.e., latch on to a genuine popular uprising in hopes of eventually dominating it.

15. In summary, the Communists are developing contingencies for future popular non-Communist revolutions in Latin America. They are prepared to employ rather flexible tactics to gain a share of the power in the confused aftermath of such revolts. In the interim, Moscow and Havana probably will assist those pro-Soviet parties which favor armed struggle, particularly if more militant organizations are seriously challenging these parties for membership and popular



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following. In most cases, however, Moscow will encourage the peaceful action "united front" methods which promise a greater chance of furthering Soviet interests. Elsewhere, for instance in Venezuela, the Communists are advocating both armed struggle and "mass political action" tactics.

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